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SUBJECT: PAKISTANI REACTION TO COPENHAGEN CONFERENCE

REF: ISLAMABAD 146

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Pakistani reaction to December's Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change ranges from disappointment with the outcome to outright disapproval of the steps taken to formulate the Copenhagen Accord. Climate change think tanks and a government research organization seem to have retained some enthusiasm for the next round of talks in Mexico City, but the tone within the Ministry of Environment is markedly more subdued when discussing further negotiations. End Summary.

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High-Risk, Low Influence
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¶2. (SBU) Given Pakistan's heavy reliance upon the rapidly depleting glacial melt from the Himalayas, the anticipated effects of climate change in Pakistan include the possibility of an acute, nationwide water shortage. GOP officials are therefore keen to see Pakistan recognized as a high-risk country. "We are not sinking, like the Maldives," said Arshad Khan, Director of the Government's Global Change Impact Studies Center (GCISC), "but our glaciers are melting and the shore is disappearing; these two factors will ruin us in time." Ministry of Environment Director General Jawed Ali Khan stressed that he would like to see the concept of a nation's "vulnerability" scientifically defined and internationally agreed upon. Pakistan, he said, should be acknowledged as highly threatened by climate change.

¶3. (SBU) The Pakistani delegation was frustrated to not have a natural voting bloc to join in Copenhagen. "We were not a BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India or China) country, we are not a less developed country and we are not a small island state," said MoE Director General Khan. "Climate change is a big problem for us, yet we are not part of these important groups." It was particularly difficult for the members of the Pakistani Copenhagen delegation to see India's tremendous influence during the negotiations. While both nations depend on monsoon rains for a percentage of their crop irrigation, Pakistan is far more reliant upon seasonal glacial melt to keep its agricultural heartland active; a fact which Pakistani experts believe makes their country much more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than India. (Note: India uses seasonal glacial melt for 15 percent of its water for agriculture, while Pakistan irrigates with 70 percent glacial melt. End Note.) As the Pakistanis see it, India's status as one of the world's highest emitters of greenhouse gases garnered it a place within the highly influential BASIC negotiating bloc, giving the Indians a voice at

Copenhagen that Pakistan lacked, while Pakistan's relatively low level of emissions meant that it was further disenfranchised.

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"This is Not an Accord"
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¶4. (SBU) Reaction to the Copenhagen Accord is for these reasons subdued in Pakistan's climate change NGOs and related Ministries. "This is not an accord," Momin Agha, Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Environment told EconOff. "To use the word 'accord' means that there was some agreement and in Copenhagen all we saw was a locked room and a handful of countries permitted inside." Ali Taugeer Sheikh, the CEO of the NGO Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) was uncharacteristically subdued in discussing the Accord, saying only that "there is a certain degree of disappointment with the outcome from Copenhagen."

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Disappointment with the U.S.
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¶5. (SBU) Pakistan is particularly dissatisfied with the level of emissions reduction pledged by the United States. "Most disappointing for me is the very small commitment from the U.S.," said the GCISC's Arshad Khan. Pakistani officials believe that the reduction promised by the U.S. is essentially equal to Kyoto Protocol levels; Pakistan had hoped that the U.S. would match levels of reduction pledged by other developed countries. "Some countries are pledging to reduce emissions by up to 35 percent," said Khan. "We expected the U.S. to come up with an approach comparable to that of the EU." Khan and Sheikh both acknowledged in passing the financial commitment pledged by the United States, but both made it clear they would rather see a commitment for emissions reduction

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from the U.S.

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The Road to Mexico
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¶6. (SBU) Unlike the GOP, representatives from both GCISC and LEAD were able to find a silver lining to Copenhagen's outcome. Arshad Khan of GCISC believes that Pakistan's ability to give voice to its concerns in a multilateral forum was a good first step in what he hopes will be ongoing negotiations. Sheikh of LEAD cast Copenhagen as a learning experience for the Pakistani delegation, listing a larger delegation and the involvement of the Prime Minister among his hopes for Pakistan's engagement in Mexico City. Ministry of Environment Deputy Secretary Agha voiced more subdued expectations for COP-16, stating "our greatest hope is to see this move forward in a more balanced and inclusive way."

¶7. (SBU) Comment: Ministry of Environment Director General Khan promised the announcement of Pakistan's formal position on the Copenhagen Accord in mid-January, yet such an announcement is still pending. It is probable that Pakistan will eventually accede to the Accord if the BASIC countries decide to do so, but any GOP action on this issue will certainly come at minimum speed and with maximum distaste. End Comment.

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